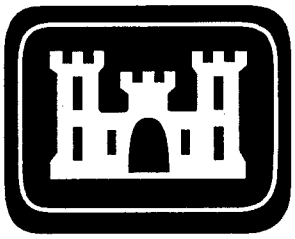
THE ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF COOPER LAKE, TEXAS



US Army Corps
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Fort Worth District

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This booklet provides an overview of what was learned as a result of cultural resources investigations funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, at Cooper Lake in Delta and Hopkins Counties, Texas. It is aimed at the general public and is intended to highlight some of the more-interesting aspects of the prehistoric and historic archeology. This is accomplished using nontechnical language to explain what archeology is and how historical research contributes to archeology, to summarize what is known about the lifeways of the prehistoric Native Americans who lived in the upper Sulphur River basin, to describe how the area was used in historic times, and to explain how this work benefits the public.

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The Archeology and History of Cooper Lake, Texas

by

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Introduction

Have you ever found an arrow point in a plowed field and wondered how old it was or how it was made? You may have wondered if Native Americans lived on the land where you now live, and asked yourself who these ancient people were and how their lives were similar to or different from ours. Or maybe you found an old glass bottle under a tree at the edge of a field and were curious about who left it there. Was it settlers who moved into the wilderness in the 1800s, or was it a family on a picnic just a few decades ago?

As part of studying the past, these are the kinds of questions that archeologists ask themselves. If you have asked such questions, you are beginning to think like an archeologist. This booklet explores how archeological and historical discoveries made at Cooper Lake are answering these and other questions.

Cooper Lake is in northeast Texas, a little over 10 miles north of Interstate Highway 30 running between Dallas and Texarkana. The nearest large towns are Greenville, Commerce, and Sulphur Springs, while the smaller community of Cooper lies just north of the lake. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the lake in 1991 to help control flooding on the South Sulphur River, to serve as a water supply for towns in the region, and to provide recreational opportunities such as fishing and boating. It covers about 19,000 acres and is surrounded by several thousand additional acres of land devoted to parks and wildlife management areas.

Located on the land that is now beneath the waters of Cooper Lake are the traces of ancient peoples who came there thousands of years ago as well as those of more recent settlers and farmers who lived there in the 1800s and in more modern times. These traces include artifacts such as pottery

and arrow points, animal bones, and rocks burned in campfires marking where Native Americans lived, where they hunted animals, and where they collected plants for food and medicine. They also include artifacts and the ruins of buildings marking the houses of nineteenth- and twentieth-century settlers. These places are called archeological sites.

These sites are now the only records of how the prehistoric Native Americans lived, since they disappeared from this part of Texas hundreds of years ago and they left no written records. For historic times though, the archeological sites are not the only evidence, since written documents are stored in the courthouses of Delta and Hopkins Counties and in the State Archives in Austin. These documents record who owned the land, who lived there, where they came from, what kinds of crops they grew, how much livestock they owned, and what they passed on to their descendants when they died. In addition, there are still a few people living in the area who have stories about what life was like before the modern era.

Federal laws require that information from important sites be preserved for future generations of Americans to enjoy and study. Because the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recognized that construction of the Cooper Lake dam, bulldozing of the forests that once lined the river to make boating easier, and finally filling of the lake would destroy archeological sites, the Corps spent a number of years studying the archeology of Delta and Hopkins Counties before they built the lake. This booklet explains some of the things that archeologists and historians discovered during these studies.

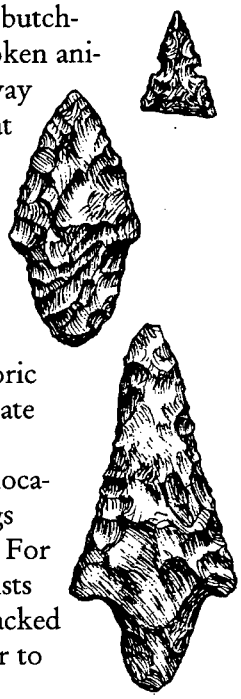
What Is Archeology?

Archeology is part of anthropology, which is the study of human physical development, languages, societies, and cultures. Archeology contributes to anthropology by asking questions about human cultures using the things people make, use, and then often throw away or lose. Consequently, archeology can study both ancient peoples and peoples of the recent past. Sometimes, archeologists are

interested in the kinds of impressive artifacts that people see in museums, for example, whole stone arrow points used by Native Americans or decorated dishes imported from England and used in early historic households. But they also are interested in the ordinary materials that people threw away.

These ordinary materials include such things as rocks and charcoal burned in campfires, burned nutshells that Native Americans cracked open to get at the nuts, bones that people left after they killed animals for food, and small pieces of flint that fell on the ground when people made arrow points and other tools out of stone. On historic sites, they include broken dishes and bottles thrown away by settlers, nails dropped when they built houses, buttons that fell off clothes and slipped through the cracks of the floorboards, pieces of empty tin cans thrown over the back fence, and pieces of broken farm equipment piled behind the barn and never used again.

Another important kind of evidence is what archeologists call "features." In prehistoric sites, features are places where Native Americans built campfires and houses, buried their dead, or dug holes in the ground to store food or set posts to support structures. The position of artifacts around features is one important thing archeologists study. For instance, burned rocks and charcoal found together might mark an ancient campfire, while artifacts found near the campfire may show the kinds of things that people did there. Nutshells and large flat rocks on one side of the campfire might suggest that people sat next to the fire and cracked open nuts on rock anvils, while arrow points and other stone tools on the other side may mark where people butchered an animal. Broken animal bones found away from the campfire at the edge of the site may be where they threw away the carcasses of butchered animals.

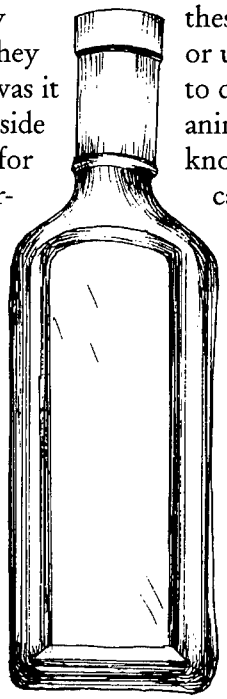


In sites used by peoples during historic times, features indicate where people built their houses or the locations of outbuildings around the houses. For example, archeologists might find rocks stacked on top of each other to

serve as foundation piers for a house, smokehouse, or barn, or they might find piles of bricks or rocks where a chimney fell down after a house collapsed. Sometimes, lines of bricks or rocks mark walkways or even flower gardens. Some historic sites contain features dug into the ground, such as pits where outhouses once stood or water wells lined with bricks or rocks. By studying where these kinds of features are on a site, archeologists can reconstruct how the early settlers' farmsteads looked. Further, the locations of certain kinds of artifacts can show what the settlers did around the farmstead. Did they have fenced yards that they kept clean and tidy, or was it more important to set aside areas close to the house for activities such as butchering?

In both prehistoric and historic sites, food remains can show the kinds of plants and animals people ate, and sometimes what time of year they ate them. For example, the bones of migrating ducks at a site would show that people hunted them in the spring or fall when the ducks were passing through the area. In this way, the small ordinary things allow archeologists to reconstruct how people lived thousands of years ago, or just a hundred years ago.

One critical thing that an archeologist does is find out how old a site is. On some prehistoric sites this is done with artifacts, since people used different kinds of artifacts during different time periods. But the most important way is called "radiocarbon dating." Radiocarbon dating works because all plants and animals breathe in natural carbon. There are several forms of natural carbon. One of these forms is radioactive, or unstable, and it begins to decay after a plant or animal dies. Since scientists know how fast this kind of carbon decays, they can do tests on a piece of charcoal or bone to find out how long it has been since the plant or animal was living. This tells the archeologist how many years have passed since the people burned the charcoal in the campfire or killed the animal for food.



On historic sites,

artifacts usually play a key role in telling the archeologist when people lived there. This is because technology changes over time. Throughout the 1800s, the use of machines to make many household products became more and more common. That kind of manufacturing replaced the practice of making things by hand, and the finished results of those two methods look different. Glass bottles are a good example of this. Older bottles were made by blowing bubbles of hot glass from the end of a long hollow rod, and then forming them into the desired shapes. Because these bottles were made as whole objects, the only marks left on them were on the bottom where the rod was separated from the bottle. In the 1730s, American glassmakers began making bottles using molds. They would blow the bubble of glass into the mold, which would shape the glass, and the mold would leave marks on the finished bottle. By the late 1800s, this process was done entirely by machines. These machines would create a bottle with a series of molds which would leave marks or "seams." A historical archeologist can look at bottle glass and see the kinds of marks that are on it. Those marks tell the archeologist how and when the bottle was made.

Another way that historical archeologists can use artifacts to tell when people lived on a site is by the style or decoration used on some objects. Just as technology changes over time, so do people's tastes or preferences. Some things become popular as others become unfashionable. Ceramics are a good example of using decoration to determine dates. The way in which pottery, such as plates, bowls, or cups, is made has not changed much over time, but people who make ceramics have decorated them in many different ways. For example, some of the ceramics found at Cooper Lake were "transfer printed." That means that they had very fancy decorations that were printed on them from engravings. By 1880, these types of ceramics were no longer popular, and people stopped buying them. So when a historical archeologist finds pieces of transfer-printed ceramics, that dates the site to an earlier period of Cooper Lake's history when the area was first settled.

Archeologists can sometimes tell older artifacts and features from more-recent ones

using "stratigraphy." Often artifacts and features are found buried within a site. This happens when soil washes in during flooding of a creek or from erosion of a hillside, or when wind blows dirt onto a site. At some sites, this has happened many times. These sites are almost like cakes with many layers. The bottom layers contain the artifacts and features that were there first, and these are the oldest parts of the site. At the top of the cake are the things that have not been there long enough to become buried deeply, and these are the most recent parts.

Archeologists also try to figure out what past environments were like. The archeologist wants to know if the environment was hotter or colder, wetter or dryer, than today's environment because this may have affected the kinds of animals that people hunted, the kinds of wild plants that they collected for food and medicine, and the kinds of crops that they grew. Archeologists often seek help in these studies from geologists, soil scientists, and ecologists.

The environment also affected sites after people abandoned them. For instance, sometimes because of the chemistry of the soil or because of rainwater trickling through the soil, things such as animal bones and plant remains disintegrate. Also, underground creatures such as gophers, worms, and ants churn the soil, and this can mix older artifacts with more recent ones. This makes it impossible for the archeologist to sort out what goes together. Sites also are destroyed when wind and water remove soil, leaving artifacts from different times mixed together. This is called erosion, and sometimes especially strong erosion can wash whole sites away.

Modern people also can disturb sites. For example, plowing a field, digging a stock tank, or building a house disturbs the ground, and if an archeological site is in that place, it is disturbed also. As both natural forces and modern land development continue to take their toll, fewer and fewer sites are left. Archeologists study the sites that are going to be destroyed and help preserve those that remain.

How Does Historical Research Contribute To Archeology?

One of the advantages available to archeology in the

historic period is that there are written records. There are many kinds of documents that researchers can use to help them better understand what they are digging up in the ground. Some of the most commonly used types of information are public records, usually kept at county courthouses. These are things like surveys, deeds, wills, and records of marriages, births, and deaths. They provide facts and figures through which a story of history can be developed. For example, the archeologists at Cooper Lake were interested in who first settled and farmed the land there. To discover this, they could go to the county courthouse, look up the records for particular pieces of land, and find out the names of the people to whom the land was originally granted. When land is sold, that is recorded too. By following records of land sales, changing ownership can be traced over time. Other records, such as those concerning births, marriages, and deaths, can allow researchers to learn about families, such as when and where someone was born, who they married, how many children they had, and when they died. With these kinds of information, archeologists can learn about specific individuals and what their lives were like.

Public records are not the only kinds of documents that archeologists can use. Any type of writing that was done by people who were in the area historically can yield clues about the past. These might include diaries, journals, farm records, or any other personal writings. These are unique because people often write about what they think or feel, and not just the facts and figures of life.

One other way that we can learn about the past is through oral histories. People who have lived in a place for a long time and remember the way things used to be, or who remember stories of the past that were told to them by their parents or grandparents, can help researchers in a unique way. They may be able to discuss things about the past that were never written down or that never left any physical traces. However, sometimes people do not remember things exactly the way they happened. Those sorts of stories are more like folklore than fact. That is why it is best to use many different kinds of data when studying historic sites. Arche-

ology, written history, and oral history all contribute different kinds of information, and when used together can give the best overall picture of the past.

Ancient Native Americans At Cooper Lake

Archeologists worked at Cooper Lake periodically for over 40 years, starting in 1951 and ending in 1994. Many organizations participated in this work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, including the Smithsonian Institution, The University of Texas at Austin, Southern Methodist University, The University of North Texas, amateur archeologists with the Dallas Archeological Society and the Fort Worth Archeological Society, Geo- Marine, Inc. (an archeological consulting firm in Plano), and Prewitt and Associates, Inc. (an archeological consulting firm in Austin). Over 240 prehistoric sites were found. Most of these saw limited work, usually consisting of an examination of artifacts exposed in eroded areas on the ground and perhaps the excavation of a few small test holes with a shovel to see if archeological materials extended below the ground. The archeologists felt that 70 of these sites might be worth more work, however, and further excavations were done. Finally, 15 sites were found to contain the most useful information about how

Archeologists digging small test holes on a prehistoric site to see if artifacts extend below the ground surface

Archeologists digging an important Native American site

Native Americans used this part of northeast Texas, and these are the ones where the archeologists spent most of their time excavating.

The Earliest Inhabitants

We do not know what the earliest peoples who lived in the area surrounding Cooper Lake called themselves or to what present-day Native American groups they were related. This is because these people lived in the distant past beyond the memories of modern people and long before there were written records. The earliest peoples at Cooper Lake lived during the times called the Paleoindian and Archaic periods. Both labels mean old or ancient. The Paleoindian period refers to the time between 10,000 and 6,000 B.C., while the Archaic period lasted from 6,000 to 200 B.C. Archeologists can tell the remains left during these two periods apart because Paleoindian and Archaic peoples made different styles of tools, including different kinds of projectile points to tip their spears for hunting.

Archeologists have not yet found any Paleoindian sites at Cooper Lake, although they know that these people did live in the area since Paleoindian

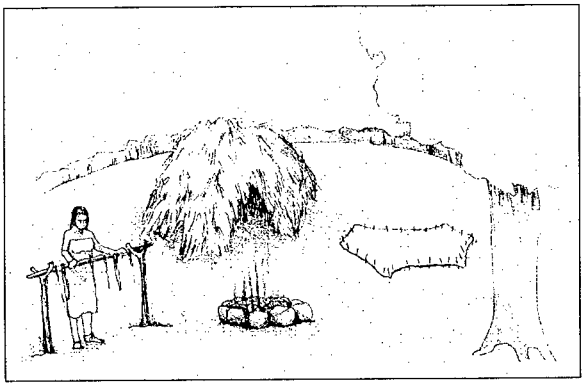
stone tools have been found on occasion. There are several reasons why the remains of these earliest peoples are so scarce. One reason is that, because these sites are so old, the river may have washed some of them away. Others may be so deeply buried by the river washing dirt over them that the archeologists have not been able to find them. Perhaps the most important reason that Paleoindian sites are rare, though, is that there were so few people living in the area that they simply did not create many sites. In fact, archeologists think that Paleoindians lived in small family groups that were highly nomadic. They made their living by gathering wild plants for food and especially by hunting.

One excavated Paleoindian site in north-central Texas, the Aubrey Clovis site at Lake Ray Roberts in Denton County, contained bones showing that the Native Americans hunted a variety of animals, including deer, turtles, fish, rabbits, squirrels, bison, and maybe even mammoth. In fact, many Paleoindian sites across the United States have bones of animals that are now extinct, especially mammoth and certain species of bison that were different than modern-day bison, and some archeologists think that Paleoindian hunters spent most of their time chasing these large mammals. Because Paleoindian peoples were constantly on the move following their animal prey, they did not stay in one place, or even one region, very long. The Paleoindians who used the Cooper Lake area may have camped there for only a week or so before moving on to what is now central Texas, west Texas, or Oklahoma, and it may have been years before they had a reason to return to the upper Sulphur River valley.

Artifacts left by Archaic peoples are more frequent in northeast Texas, but archeologists have had a hard time finding pure Archaic sites since many of the places where Archaic peoples lived were also the same places where later Native Americans lived. Nonetheless, archeologists think that the greater numbers of Archaic artifacts mean that populations grew larger. People lived in small, nomadic groups of perhaps a few families who moved regularly to hunt animals where they were abundant and to collect plants as they were ready to eat, but the ways that

Native Americans used the land changed. Sometimes they set up camps and returned to them again and again, maybe even every year.

The Archaic people stayed at these base camps for a few weeks, and they did many different kinds of things there. They made new tools and repaired old ones. They worked hides to make clothes and other things they needed. They butchered animals and cooked some of the meat to eat that day, while they dried the rest of the meat to eat after they moved to another campsite. They gathered wild plant foods such as berries and roots, both to eat that day and to process for eating later. And



What an Archaic Native American campsite may have looked like

they built features such as campfires, pits to roast food in, racks for drying meat, and probably small huts made of branches to keep out the rain and wind.

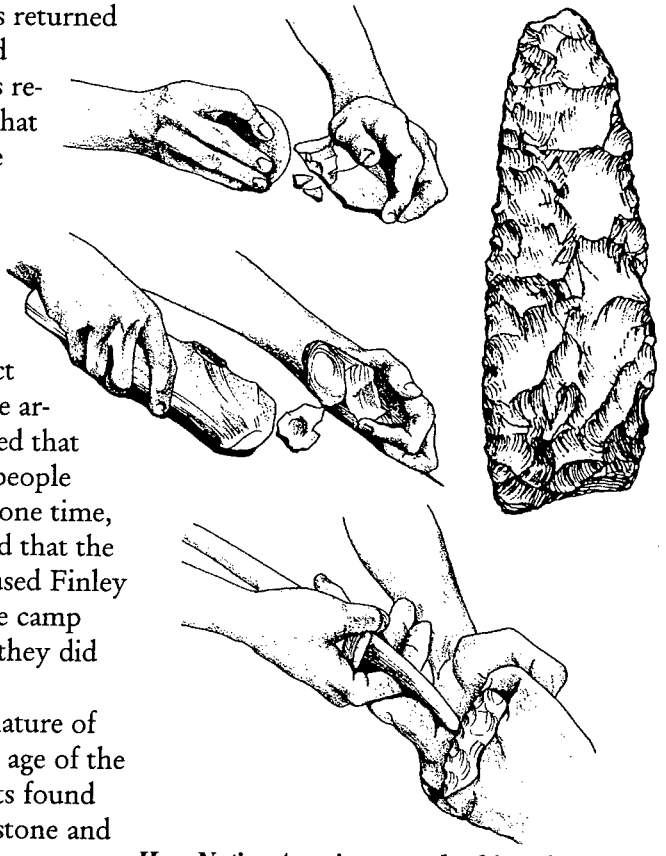
On occasion, a few people would move out from the base camp to smaller camps set up for special purposes. For example, they may have traveled to a grove of hickory trees and camped there for a few days to gather and process nuts, which they then carried back to the base camp. Or a hunting party may have gone out for a few days to find game and butcher it so that they could bring meat back to the rest of the group. Archeologists can tell when people used camps in these ways by the kinds of artifacts and features they left behind.

While Archaic artifacts occur at many sites at Cooper Lake, just one excavated site dates only to the Archaic period. This is the Finley Fan site. It was on the banks of a small stream called Finley Branch that flowed into the South Sulphur River. Archeologists dug two excavation blocks to explore this site. The first block found artifacts and features at 1 to 3 feet below the surface.

This deposit was radiocarbon dated at 150 to 1650 B.C. The second block encountered artifacts and features at 5 to 7 feet below the surface. These deeper remains were older, dating from 3250 to 4450 B.C. The archeologists found several piles of burned rocks, and these probably mark the remains of ancient campfires. Since these rock piles were scattered throughout the site, like nuts in a layer cake, it was obvious to the archeologists that the Archaic peoples returned to the site again and again. The artifacts reflecting the things that the people did were found lying around these campfires in areas ranging from 13 to 20 feet in diameter. Because these artifact areas were small, the archeologists concluded that a small number of people used the site at any one time, but they also learned that the Native Americans used Finley Fan more like a base camp than a camp where they did only one activity.

Because of the nature of the soils and the old age of the site, the archeologists found only tools made of stone and the debris from making those tools, the rocks from the campfires, and a few bits of charcoal. All of the bones of the animals that people butchered and ate and all of the other artifacts that they used in their daily lives, such as wooden spear shafts, hide bags and clothing, baskets, and carved bone tools had decayed.

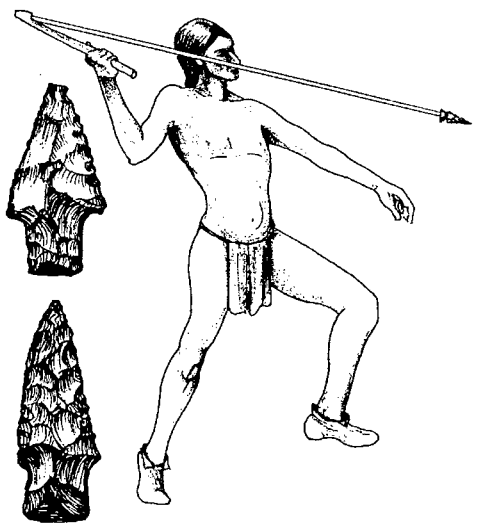
Most of the tools around the campfires were what archeologists call "chipped stone



How Native Americans made chipped stone tools

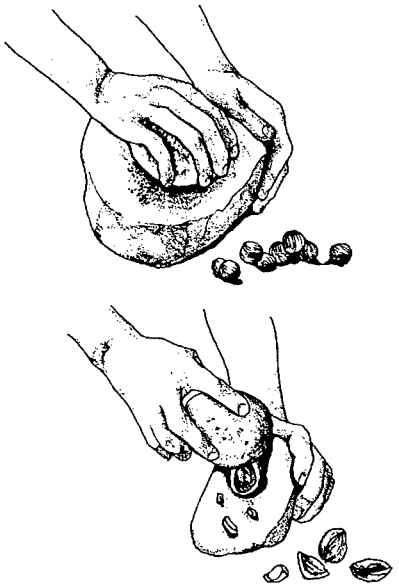
tools," since the Native Americans worked them into particular shapes by chipping away smaller and smaller pieces using another rock or a bone or antler as a hammer. Once they got the basic shape of a tool, they then sharpened the edges using the tip of an antler to remove tiny pieces. One reason that they used these kinds of rocks is that when the rocks broke they had edges almost as sharp as a piece of broken glass. Native Americans used these sharp edges for many purposes, and they made tools in many shapes and sizes depending on what they needed to do. They made most of these tools from quartzite rocks picked up from the hillsides just south of the site, but a few were of a kind of rock called "chert" that may have come from the Red River about 40 miles away. Maybe they traveled that far as they moved from camp to camp, or maybe they obtained the chert through trade with other people who lived on the Red River.

One type of chipped stone tool that was common at the Finley Fan site was the dart point. Before the bow and arrow was invented, the people of the Archaic period hunted using darts or spears and atlatls. The dart or spear consisted of a long wooden shaft with a large stone point fastened to one end. A hunter threw a dart using an atlatl, which was a wooden tool about the length of a human arm with a small hook at one end and a handle at the other. The butt end of the dart or spear was placed at the hook end of the atlatl, while the hunter held both the shaft and the thrower. The hunter could then use the thrower to hurl the dart. This ingenious device allowed the hunter to hit a target with many times more force then if the dart had been thrown just by hand.

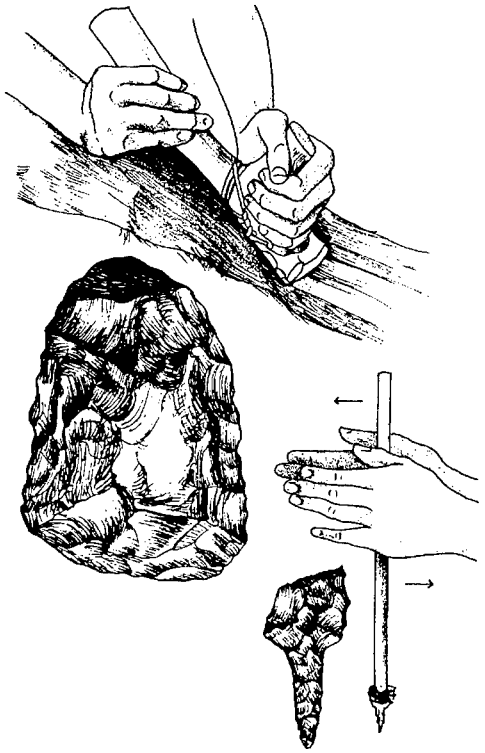


Examples of Archaic dart points and how an atlatl was used

Other kinds of chipped stone tools found at the site included scrapers, gouges, drills, choppers, wedges, and knives. Native Americans used scrapers to clean animal skins for clothing and blankets. They used gouges, drills, and wedges to make tools out of wood and bone. They used choppers to smash animal bones so they could eat the marrow. And they used knives in cutting up meat and plants for food. Most of these tools had handles made of wood, but archeologists do not find these handles because they have long-since decayed.



How manos and metates were used to crack nuts and make flour



Examples of a drill and a gouge and how they were used

The site also contained another group of stone tools not made by chipping. These artifacts are called "ground stone tools" since the Native Americans made them by pecking and grinding. These tools include large slabs called "metates" where they ground seeds and some kinds of nuts into flour using a smaller hand-sized grinding stone called a "mano." Many metates and manos also have small pits about the size of a pecan or hickory nut, and they used

these as anvils to hold nuts while they were cracking them open. Another tool that fits in this category is called a "hammerstone." Hammerstones are rocks with battered ends. The Native Americans probably used some of them in making chipped stone tools, while they used others as hammers in breaking nuts and crushing other kinds of food.

The Woodland Period

The next archeological period at Cooper Lake is the Woodland period, which dates from 200 B.C. to A.D. 800. Much of how Woodland peoples lived was similar to the lifeways of Archaic peoples. People still followed a nomadic lifestyle and relied on hunting animals and collecting wild plants for food, but they started to experiment with growing food too. They still used the atlatl and dart for hunting, as well as all the other kinds of stone tools used by Archaic peoples, but fewer of these tools were of chert from faraway places. This shows that Woodland peoples did not travel over areas that were as large as those used by the Archaic peoples. This may signal that peoples' ideas about how far their home territories extended were changing, and this may mean that more people lived in the area. As populations grew, different Native American groups claimed less and less space so that they could avoid fights over who got to use which hunting ground or who got to harvest the hickory nuts in a particular river valley. Woodland groups still moved often to take advantage of when and where food was available, but their campsites became larger since more people were living there and since people probably stayed at each camp longer.

Most of the excavated sites at Cooper Lake have artifacts dating to the Woodland period. One of the most important of these is the Hurricane Hill site. Native Americans used Hurricane Hill, which sits on a bluff overlooking the South Sulphur River valley, many times over thousands of years both before and after the Woodland period. The part of the site that dates to the Woodland Period is important to archeologists not so much because of the artifacts there, but because it contains a small cemetery with at least 13 human burials. Some of the burials

have cremated skeletons, and some of these contain the remains of more than one person. In fact, the multiple cremations were at the center of all the burials, suggesting that the Woodland people planned the cemetery. The special treatment of the dead by cremation and the planned nature of the cemetery are the oldest known examples of the religious and ceremonial activities practiced by the ancient people who lived at Cooper Lake. This type of treatment of the dead probably came from religious ideas among Native Americans who lived in the eastern United States. This cemetery is an indication that Woodland peoples returned again and again to Hurricane Hill and that they claimed the area as part of their home territory.

The Hurricane Hill site did not contribute much information on the kinds of foods that Woodland peoples ate, but archeologists have gotten such information from other sites. For example, they recovered many animal bones from the Tick and Spike sites on the banks of the South Sulphur River. These bones show that people relied heavily on deer, but they also caught rabbits, opossum, squirrels, beaver, fox, raccoon, coyote, mink, bobcat, antelope, bison, several kinds of birds, turtles, snakes, frogs, several kinds of fish, and mussels. Plant remains from these sites show that the people ate hickory nuts, acorns, prairie turnip roots, and seeds. Plant parts from another site indicate that some Woodland peoples in the area were beginning to experiment with growing squash.

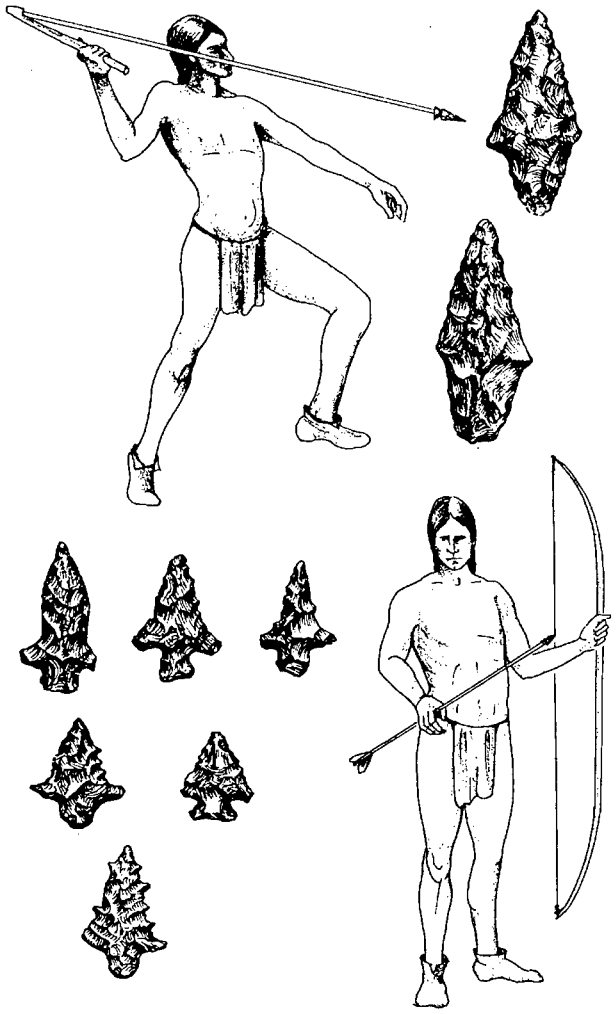
The Caddoan Period

The Caddoan period, which lasted from A.D. 800 to 1500 in the upper Sulphur River valley, is the first time period for which archeologists can tie what they find in the ground to a present-day Native

American group. This group is the Caddo Indians, most of whom now live in western Oklahoma. Before settlers drove them out, however, the Caddo lived across a wide area ranging from east Texas and western Louisiana to eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas.

Because this area was so large and because it encompassed many different environments, not all Caddo groups had the same lifestyles. For instance, the Caddo who occupied the rich lands along the Red River lived year- round in villages, and they erected earthen mounds on which they built temples for religious ceremonies and in which they buried their leaders when they died. They also had large, planned cemeteries where they buried other people, and they often placed offerings such as pots made of clay or quivers of arrows in the graves to accompany the deceased into the afterlife. The temple and burial mounds and the cemeteries are indications that these Caddo had complex social systems. They were settled farmers who grew corn and other crops for food, although they continued to use wild plants and to hunt for food as well.

The Caddo who lived at Cooper Lake had a different lifestyle. While they had gardens with corn and squash, they continued to rely more on wild plants. Further, they were not as settled as the Caddo on the Red River. While a few of the sites at Cooper Lake may be places where people lived year-round, Native Americans probably used most for no more than a few months at a time. Thus, it appears that the Caddo who lived there were more nomadic than some other Caddo groups but less nomadic than the earlier Archaic and Woodland peoples. The Cooper Lake Caddo also did not build mounds, and they did not have large cemeteries with elaborate burials. Just why these Native Americans lived differently is something of a mystery, but archeologists have suggested two answers. Maybe they never became settled farmers because the environment of Cooper Lake, which is on the Blackland Prairie instead of the forested regions of northeast Texas, made it harder to cultivate fields and grow crops. And maybe they never developed complex social systems because they were at the edge of the Caddoan region, far



Examples of Woodland or early Caddoan dart points and early Caddoan arrow points

from the ceremonial sites that were the centers of religious and political power.

The early part of the Caddoan period, A.D. 800-1300, was the time when Native Americans used the Cooper Lake area most intensively, and this probably means that populations were larger than before or after. Many of the known prehistoric sites have artifacts dating to this time, and most of the sites that ended up being excavated by the archeologists were places where the early Caddo lived. Because so much information exists, archeologists know more about this time period than any other.

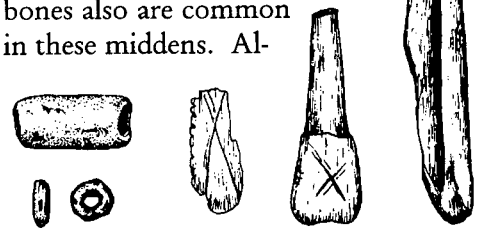
All of the excavated early Caddo sites have features called "middens." A midden is a place where people dumped their garbage, such as the carcasses of animals left over after butchering, ashes and charcoal cleaned out of campfires, and nutshells broken to get at the nuts. When they dumped enough of these organic materials in one place, these things decayed and turned the soil almost black. Middens are important to archeologists not only because they contain food remains and

artifacts, but also because they show that the Native Americans lived at one place long enough to decide to throw their garbage in one part of the site, or maybe they returned to that place often enough that they could still see where the trash pile they used last time was. It is partly because of these middens that the archeologists think that populations increased during the early Caddo period and that people began to stay at sites longer than before.

Animal bones from these middens show that deer continued to be the main animal hunted by the early Caddo, but they also ate many other kinds of creatures. These include rabbits, opossums, squirrels, beavers, muskrats, foxes, raccoons, coyotes, skunks, minks, bobcats, antelopes, quail, hawks, owls, turkeys, herons, prairie chickens, ducks and geese, many kinds of turtles, snakes, frogs, several kinds of fish including catfish and gar, and mussels. Archeologists also have found the remains of plants used by the early Caddo. They continued to eat many kinds of wild plants, such as hickory nuts, pecans, acorns, prairie turnip roots, grapes, blackberries, honey locust seeds, and grass seeds. The early Caddo also grew corn and squash, but archeologists have found so few remains of these plants that they think these cultivated crops were less important than wild foods.

Most of the stone tools used by the early Caddo were the same kinds used by the earlier Woodland and Archaic peoples. These include scrapers, drills, gouges, wedges, choppers, hammerstones, a variety of ground stones, and even dart points showing that they continued to hunt with the dart and atlatl. It was during this period, though, that Native Americans first started to use the bow and arrow for hunting as well. Archeologists can tell this because they have found many stone points that are much smaller than dart points and of different shapes, and these small points are just the right size to fit on the end of an arrow.

Tools made out of animal bones also are common in these middens. Al-



Beads, ornaments, and awls made from animal bones

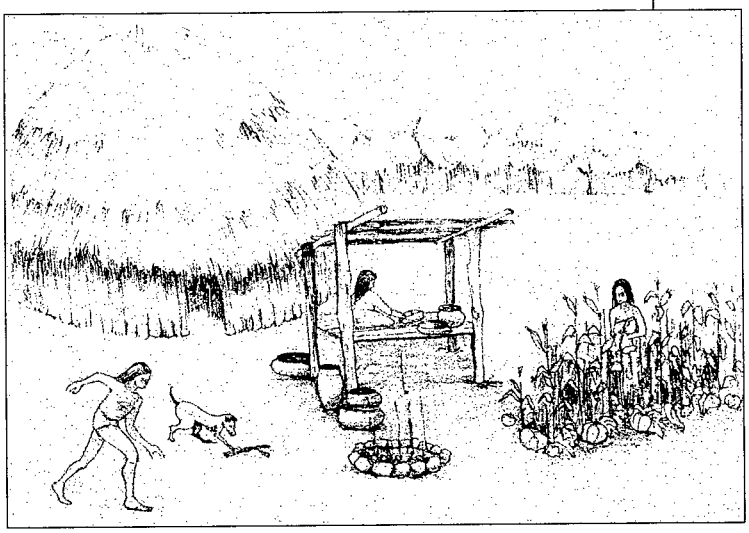
though they are usually broken, most appear to have been awls or pins used in making cloth, weaving mats or baskets, and making rope. Several of them have decorated ends, and the Caddo may have used these as personal ornaments, such as hair pins. Other ornaments found in the middens include beads made out of animal bones or even seashells obtained from the Gulf coast.

One important new kind of tool used by the early Caddo Indians, perhaps because they needed to process and store larger quantities of plant foods, was the clay pot. The earlier Woodland peoples may have used clay pots too, but the early Caddo used pottery much more often. Pottery vessels were a more efficient way of cooking since they allowed people to cook food directly over a fire. Also, they were better containers to store extra food since, once closed, they could keep out bugs that could eat through a skin bag or a basket. The different styles of vessels and their decorations also provide clues for archeologists about how different Caddoan groups interacted with one another. For instance, most of the decorated early Caddo pottery at Cooper Lake has designs that are local versions of designs that occurred across much of east Texas. Therefore, archeologists think that many of the groups in this part of the Caddoan area had shared ideas about how to make pots. This might mean that there was considerable communication between groups about pottery making, for example, when different groups met during hunting trips. Or perhaps the Caddo traded the pots them-

Early Caddoan pottery

selves and the designs were copied in that way. In a few instances though, the pottery found at Cooper Lake has decorations that look like designs found on pots in eastern Oklahoma and northwestern Louisiana. These designs show that the Cooper Lake Caddo sometimes interacted with groups who lived far away.

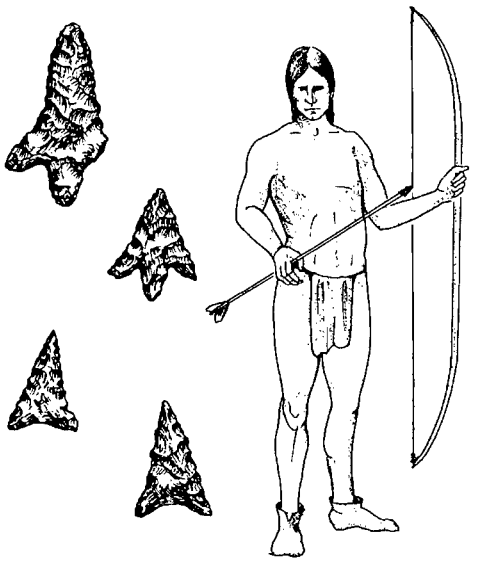
In addition to middens, the early Caddoan sites contained features such as campfires, pits or depressions dug into the ground to hold plants while they they were being processed for food, holes dug into the ground to hold wooden posts for houses or drying racks, and sometimes human burials. The arrangement of these features on a site shows the archeologist what the Native American camps looked like. For example, at the Spider Knoll site, archeologists used a roadgrader to scrape the topsoil off a large area to expose as many subsurface features as possible. In one part of the site, they found many postholes, a few small pits, and the remains of several campfires. This is where the Caddo built their houses and engaged in some of the outside activities you might expect for people who spent much of their time outdoors. This might have included cracking open pecans, grinding corn, cooking their meals, making baskets, and scraping hides to make clothes. Not far away in another part of the site were some large pits and the remains of a few campfires. This may be where the Caddo piled roots, corn stalks, or other bulky plants that they



What the early Caddoan settlement at Hurricane Hill may have looked like

brought in from the forests or their gardens and where they processed them into food or other things they needed. Not surprisingly, the midden where they dumped the smelly trash was at the foot of the hill, well away from the living area.

While the postholes told the archeologists that houses had once stood at the Spider Knoll site, the arrangement of the features showed they were temporary shelters, like lean-tos or brush arbors, rather than permanent houses. Archeologists digging in the part of the Hurricane Hill site that dates to about 650 years ago found features indicating that the Caddo built different kinds of houses there. These houses were well-built rectangular structures made of poles and brush probably covered with mud plaster. Archeologists call this kind of construction "wattle-and-daub." The houses measured 20 to 25 feet across, and people probably lived in them year-round. It appears that only one house was present at any one time, but because some of the posthole patterns overlap, the archeologists concluded that the Caddo rebuilt, or remodeled, them from time to time.



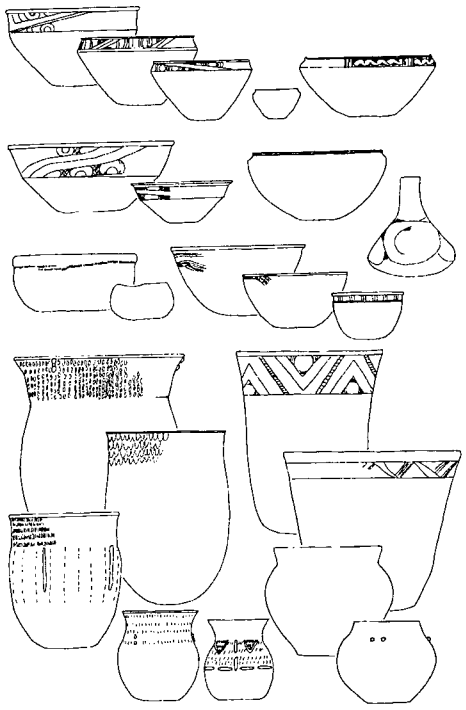
Examples of late Caddoan arrow points

These permanent houses at Hurricane Hill mark the beginning of an important change in how the Caddo used the Cooper Lake area. By the late part of the Caddoan period, A.D. 1300-1500, fewer Caddo were living in the upper Sulphur River valley than before, but the ones who were still there stayed year-round instead of moving to a new campsite every few months. These late Caddo peoples ate the same kinds of foods as the earlier Caddo groups, and they used many of the same kinds of tools. One difference in their tools, though, was that they stopped using the dart and atlatl for hunting, instead relying solely on the bow and

arrow. Also, the styles of arrow points that they used changed.

One other difference between the late Caddo and the early Caddo is that the later peoples made much greater use of pottery vessels. For example, archeologists found parts of at least 54 pots at one late site known as Peerless Bottoms. These pots came in many different sizes and shapes, and with different kinds of decorations. The Caddo probably used these different kinds of pots for different things. They used some for cooking, some for serving food, some for storage, some to hold liquids, and some maybe even for religious ceremonies.

The many decorated vessels from Peerless Bottoms are important also because they show that the late Caddo peoples at Cooper Lake interacted with other Native Americans. For example, the designs on some of these pots are similar to those used by Caddo groups who lived on the Red River to the north, while others look like the designs on pots made by the Caddo who lived along Cypress Creek to the southeast. A few even suggest that the



Late Caddoan pottery

people at Cooper Lake borrowed ideas from, or traded with, Native Americans who lived on the Plains of north-central Texas and south-central Oklahoma.

The question of why the Caddo used the Cooper Lake area in different ways during the early and late parts of the period is one that archeologists have not been able to answer fully, but they have offered several explanations. One reason may be that there was a change to a drier climate at about A.D. 1300, and that this

change affected the numbers and kinds of plants and animals such that it was harder for the region to support large numbers of people. Another possible reason relates to changes in Caddoan populations across all of northeast Texas. When the first European explorers reached the region, they found the Caddo concentrated in two areas, one in the Great Bend of the Red River and the other along the Neches and Angelina Rivers in east Texas. It may be that the Caddo came together into these two concentrations only during late prehistoric times and that, before then, many of these people lived in smaller groups scattered throughout the region, including the upper Sulphur River valley.

Historic Settlers At Cooper Lake

Many of the important events in the history of Texas as a whole did not have a large effect on the Cooper Lake area. Its location in far northeast Texas kept it isolated from many of the early settlement efforts that took place farther south nearer the coast. The Spanish and French made ventures into Texas before the 1800s, but there are no known sites in the area that can be traced to these activities. By 1821, Mexico had won its independence from Spain, thus putting the territory of Texas under Mexican rule. In turn, Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836 and became its own republic. Texas finally joined the Union in 1845, and that is about the time when the Cooper Lake area began to develop.

The Cooper Lake area today is made up of parts of Delta and Hopkins Counties. When people first began to move there and set up farmsteads in the 1850s, it was just Hopkins County, which was established in 1846. Delta County was not created until 1870.

Early settlement in the region was made up of scattered farms. In time, several thriving communities developed, but none were ever very big towns. Two communities in particular, Cedar Creek and Granny's Neck (also known as Pecan Grove), were studied by the historical archeologists.

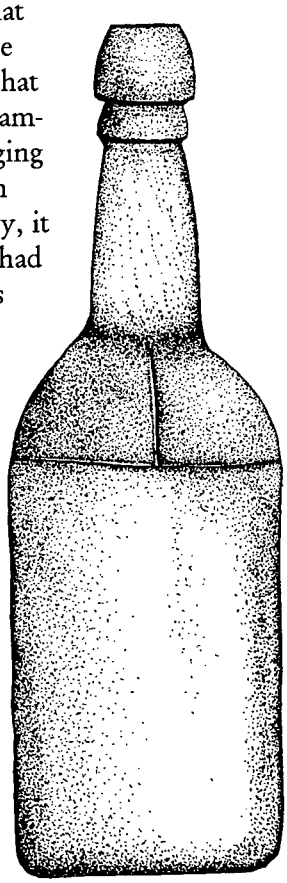
As with many areas of far northeast Texas, the people who moved to the Cooper Lake area in the 1850s were farmers from states such as Illinois and Tennessee. They

grew cotton and a variety of food crops for the family, including such staples as vegetables, corn, wheat, and rye. They also kept livestock, including pigs or cows. These farmers usually owned their land, and most of them did not have slaves. The 1850s was a prosperous period for farmers in Texas at a time when that was not the case in other states. The farmers who made the most money, though, were those who lived farther to the south and who grew a lot of cotton using slave labor.

Although slavery was not as common on the small farms at Cooper Lake as it was on the larger plantations, it still existed. For example, in what today is Delta County, researchers studied the farmstead of a man named James Franks. He had 433 acres and two slaves. They probably helped produce his crops and also spent time hired out working on other farmers' land. Franks lived on this farm only from about 1852, when he came to Texas, to when he died in 1857.

When archeologists excavated this site, they were able to reconstruct how they thought his farm might have looked. The features they found correspond to what they think would have been a house on the edge of a hill that faced either east or south, a smokehouse about 30 feet behind the house, and a yard between the two where many site activities would have taken place.

The artifacts recovered from that work showed the kinds of things that Franks and his family owned. Judging from the broken pottery especially, it seems that they had some belongings that would have been expensive. Archeologists found the remains of transfer-printed ceramics, bottles, window glass, animal bones left over from food, a fork, part of a coffee grinder, two keys, parts of smoking pipes, nails,



Glass from wine bottles such as this was found at the James Franks farmstead

buttons, pieces of brick, and many other things.

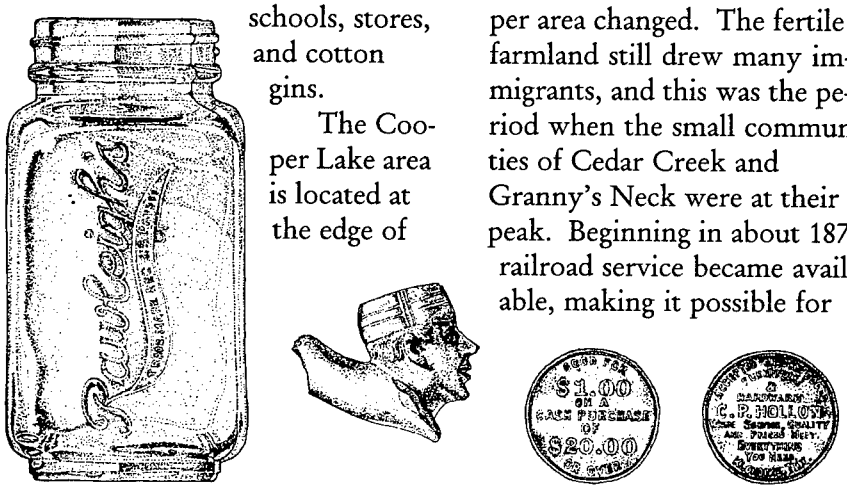
The original records kept in the Delta County courthouse, such as his will and his probate inventory, listed how much Franks owned when he died, and how much they were worth. By combining all this information, we can know that Franks was a successful farmer.

By studying many sites such as the farm owned by James Franks, a picture of the community can be developed. Not all sites provide as much information as others, but we can learn about individuals, their farms, the histories of their families, how all those families socialized with each other, and the kinds of community places that they frequented, such as churches, schools, stores, and cotton gins.

The Cooper Lake area is located at the edge of the Blackland Prairie, known for a long time as a big cotton production area. However, before the Civil War, cotton was still not the major crop that it became later.

The years of the Civil War, 1861-1865, brought hard times to most. Texas was not as affected by those events as other southern states. As a matter of fact, northeast Texas was able to benefit from the fighting and help the Confederate cause at the same time. This was because most of the battles were fought far away from Texas, and Texans were able to supply the troops west of the Mississippi River who had been cut off from other sources of supplies.

After the Civil War, the nature of farm life in the Cooper area changed. The fertile farmland still drew many immigrants, and this was the period when the small communities of Cedar Creek and Granny's Neck were at their peak. Beginning in about 1872, railroad service became available, making it possible for



A glass jar, clay pipe, and store token found at sites in the Friendship community

the farmers to get their cash crops to market. Grain farmers began to convert to cotton farming. This also was the period when tenant farming became widespread. Tenant farmers were people who worked the land that other people owned. By about 1900, most people in the area grew cotton to sell and raised the food to feed their families.

Shortly after this, however, the lives of cotton farmers became harder when the crops were destroyed by the boll weevil. The farmers in Delta and Hopkins Counties suffered as those elsewhere, but because they raised all their own food, they usually did not go hungry. That was something that would help them later, too.

Cotton production suffered its worst problems during the Great Depression of the 1930s. People all across the United States were poor and out of work, and cotton was no longer worth as much as it had been. The tenant cotton farmers of Delta and Hopkins Counties sometimes had to turn over their entire crop to pay debts to the bank or landowners. As before, even though they were poor, they were able to feed their families with the food they grew and produced themselves, however. Informant Mrs. Van (Buna) George lived in Cedar Creek at that time and recalled: "They were still raising cotton there. They raised a little corn for the meal that you ground or for the hogs or for the stock, but usually it was cotton because it paid your debts, what you borrowed at the bank. You had to pay them back and that's the way people paid them back, cotton. Well we were poor, but everybody was poor, but we didn't know it. Course we raised our own food, raised our hogs, had our chickens, had our cows, had our vegetable garden of course. We canned everything." That made the hard times of the Great Depression a little more bearable for them than it was for the unemployed workers in the cities.

The Great Depression ended with the arrival of World War II, when all Americans were called upon to help in the war effort in one way or another. As with many major events in history, the effects were felt across all levels of society. Upon returning from duty abroad, many men who originally were rural farmers chose to leave the coun-

try and move to the city. That caused a general decline in the rural population in places like Delta and Hopkins Counties.

The archeologists observed that trend by studying one of the communities in Delta County, an Afro-American settlement called Friendship. The history reconstructed for Friendship touches on many of the important aspects of both Texas and American history. Three archeological sites were excavated in Friendship, all farmsteads. The archeologists found bottle glass, ceramics, a clay pipe shaped like a person, a store token for a local business, a World War I dog tag, gun parts, a doll, some jewelery, and other various items at these three farms.

The community was originally established in the 1870s by freed slaves, who purchased land just south of the Anglo-American town of Klondike. They were cotton farmers like most people, served in World War I, and after that began to move to the city. Those remaining lived through the Depression and served in World War II, and upon returning many chose to move to the city. That kind of migration many times brought decline to small farming communities.

Delta County eventually was able to recover its cotton industry and is today one of the major cotton producers in Texas. On the other hand, the crash of the cotton market led people in Hopkins County to explore other economic options. They shifted away from growing cotton and moved into dairying. Many of the small tenant farmers in the Cooper Lake area produced milk, butter, and other dairy products. Austin and Jewel Brantley, who had lived in the Cedar Creek community for almost 50 years when they were interviewed in 1988, recalled their own activities. Austin remembered, "I had nine milk cows and I milked and shipped milk all the time you see and I'd sell milk in Cooper. I sell over a hundred quarts of milk in Cooper every morning. . . . See I was milking lots of cows and I had a milk barn." Jewel adds, "I'd churn and we'd peddle butter and butter milk, sweet milk . . . a lot of people down in there had milk." Today, Hopkins County is a major center for dairy production.

Is There Still More To Learn?

The story told above comes from many years of study by archeologists and historians.

These studies, funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to recover information before it was lost to the construction and filling of the lake, resulted in the discovery of hundreds of archeological sites, and the most important of these were excavated. The knowledge gained from this work benefits not only archeologists and historians but also the general public. For example, people who now live in Delta and Hopkins Counties and the surrounding area know what life in northeast Texas is like today, but it is only through archeology and history that they can learn about how people who were there in the past made a living, how they used the land, how they formed communities, and how they interacted with their neighbors. Of course, other people who do not live in the area, such as the modern-day descendants of both the Caddo Indians and the early historic settlers who once occupied the region, may have an even more direct interest in learning about these subjects. What these people have in common, and what they share with some other people who are interested in American heritage in general, is a curiosity about the past. Archeology and history can satisfy this curiosity and provide a richer understanding of how our lives today are in some ways so different from, and in other ways still similar to, those of the people who lived in Texas long ago.

Now that the waters of Cooper Lake have covered most of the prehistoric and historic sites there and the archeologists have written many reports about their findings, it seems that there might be no further work to be done. But as this booklet reveals, some of the questions raised at Cooper Lake cannot be answered yet. Fortunately, excavations at archeological sites, research with historical documents, and studies of oral histories preserve information for future scholars who may want to tackle these questions or ask new ones. All of the artifacts, animal bones, and plant remains found at the sites, as well as the maps and many pages of notes made by the archeologists and historians and the thousands of photographs of the sites, are kept at Southern Methodist University, the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at The University of Texas at Austin, or the University of North Texas. These preserved traces of the past will give the public and future researchers information to ponder for years to come.

Who To Contact If You Want To Learn More About Archeology

There are many places where you can get more information about archeology. These include local libraries, state-wide and local societies where amateur and professional archeologists meet to share their interests and experiences, and state agencies who provide leadership and assistance on projects relating to archeology and historic preservation. The addresses for some of these are provided below.

State Agencies:

Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas, 78711

Oklahoma Archeological Survey
The University of Oklahoma
111 E. Chesapeake
Norman, Oklahoma 73019

Arkansas Archeological Survey
P.O. Box 1249
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72702

Division of Archaeology
P.O. Box 44247
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Archeological Societies:

Texas Archeological Society
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas 78249

Northeast Texas Archeological Society
P.O. Box 239
Marshall, Texas 75670

East Texas Archeological Society
P.O. Box 630128
Nacogdoches, Texas 75963

Oklahoma Anthropological Society
Route 1, Box 62B
Cheyenne, Oklahoma 73628

Louisiana Archaeological Society
1260 Main Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

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